AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A vessel suitable for accepting a liquid biological sample, ~~exposing~~ which exposes said sample to a first substance and subsequently a nucleic acid ~~stabilising~~stabilizing agent, said vessel comprising:

a) a first substance present inside said vessel,

b) a container in which said ~~stabilising~~stabilizing agent is present,

c) a connection between the inside of said vessel and the inside of said container,

d) a physical barrier that temporarily blocks said connection.

2. (Currently amended) ~~A~~ The vessel according to claim 1 wherein said first substance is ~~immobilised~~immobilized on part or all of the inside surface of said vessel.

3. (Currently amended) ~~A~~ The vessel according to claim 1 wherein said first substance is ~~immobilised~~immobilized on a solid support.

4. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to claim 1 wherein said first substance is a liquid.

5. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to claim 1 wherein said first substance is a solid.

6. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to ~~any of claims 1 to 5~~claim 1 comprising one or more areas suitable for puncture by a syringe needle.

7. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to ~~any of claims 1 to 6~~claim 6 wherein said area is a re-sealable septum.

8. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to ~~any of claims 1 to 7~~claim 1, further comprising a fitting suitable for receiving a syringe and transmitting the contents therein to the interior of said vessel.

9. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to ~~any of claims 1 to 8~~claim 1, further comprising a fitting suitable for receiving a syringe needle or cannula.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to ~~claims 1 to 10~~claim 1, further comprising a valve which is capable of ~~minimising~~minimizing the flow of gas/liquid from the vessel, and allowing the flow of liquid biological sample into the vessel.

12. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to ~~any of claims 1 to 11~~claim 1, further comprising a means through which displaced gas may be expelled.

13. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to ~~any of claims 1 to 12~~claim 1 wherein said vessel is held under negative pressure.

14. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to ~~any of claims 1 to 13~~claim 1 wherein the physical barrier of item d) is opened by the application of physical force to said vessel.

15. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to claim 14 wherein said force transmits an opening means to said physical barrier.

16. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to ~~claims 14 and 15~~claim 14 wherein said force irreversibly opens said physical barrier.

17. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to ~~any of claims 1 to 16~~claim 1 wherein said vessel further comprises an indication for dispensing a known volume of ~~stabilising~~stabilizing agent therein.

18. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to ~~any of claims 1 to 17~~claim 1 wherein said first substance comprises one or more immune system antigens.

19. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to claim 18 wherein said immune system antigens are vaccine components.

20. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to claim 18 wherein said immune system antigens are antigens which provoke a hyperallergenic response.

21. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to claim 18 wherein said immune system antigens are one or more selected from the group consisting of histocompatibility antigens, bacterial LPS, tetanous toxoid, a cancer immunotherapy antigen, MAGE-3, a cat allergen, Feld1, antigen presenting cells from an organ donor, an autoantigen, and GAD65.

22. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to ~~any of claims 1 to 21~~claim 1 wherein said ~~stabilising~~stabilizing agent is an inhibitor of cellular RNA degradation and/or gene induction.

23. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ vessel according to claim 22 wherein said inhibitor of cellular RNA degradation and/or gene induction is that as found in a PAXgene™ Blood RNA Tube.

24. (Currently amended) A method of ~~pulsing a sample of blood with an antigen, subsequently inhibiting cellular RNA degradation and/or gene induction therein and subsequently~~ testing RNA components in ~~the~~a ~~stabilised~~stabilized blood sample ~~so pulsed comprising the use of a~~which comprises pulsing a sample of blood with an antigen in the vessel according to claim 1, and subsequently inhibiting cellular RNA degradation and/or gene induction therein ~~vessel according to any of claims 1 to 23~~.

25. (Currently amended) A method of testing ~~the~~ an immune response of an individual towards an antigen ~~comprising the use of a vessel according to any of claims 1 to 23 wherein the first substance is the antigen under investigation,~~ comprising the steps of:

a) introducing a sample of blood taken from said individual into the vessel of claim 1,

b) ~~optionally~~ agitating said vessel,

c) introducing after a pre-determined period of time, said nucleic acid ~~stabilising~~stabilizing agent into said vessel, and

d) testing the levels of mRNA,

wherein the first substance is the antigen.

26. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ method according to claim 25 where step d) further comprises the steps of :

e) forming a precipitate comprising nucleic acids,

f) separating said precipitate of step (e) from the supernatant,

g) dissolving said precipitate of step (f) using a buffer, forming a suspension,

h) isolating nucleic acids from said suspension of step (g) using an automated device,

i) dispersing/distributing a reagent mix for RT-PCR using an automated device,

j) dispersing/distributing the nucleic acids isolated in step (h) within the dispersed reagent mix of step (i) using an automated device, and,

k) determining the *in vivo* levels of transcripts using the nucleic acid/RT-PCR reagent mix of step (j) in an automated setup.

27. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ method according to ~~claims 25 and 26~~claim 25 wherein the immune response of an individual towards an antigen against which the individual has been pre-~~immunised~~immunized is tested, the first substance is the antigen under investigation and the levels of cytokine mRNA are tested.

28. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ method according to claim 27 wherein said cytokine is one or more selected from the group consisting of IL-2, IL-4, IL-13, and IFN-gamma.

29. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ method according to ~~claims 25 and 26~~claim 25 wherein the hyperallergenicity of an individual towards an antigen is tested, the first substance is the antigen under investigation and the levels of IL-4 mRNA are tested.

30. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ method according to ~~claims 25 and 26~~claim 25 wherein ~~the~~ rejection of an organ transplant in an individual towards an antigen is tested, wherein the first substance is a histocompatibility antigen of the donor and the levels of IL-2 mRNA are tested.

31. (Currently amended) A method of testing RNA components in a stabilized blood sample comprising:

collecting a blood sample in the~~Use of a~~ vessel according to ~~any of claims 1 to 23 for~~claim 1;

pulsing a sample of blood with an antigen, subsequently inhibiting cellular RNA degradation and/or gene induction therein; and ~~subsequently~~

testing RNA components in the ~~stabilised~~stabilized blood sample so pulsed.

32. (Currently amended) A method of testing RNA components in a stabilized blood sample comprising: ~~Use of a vessel according to any of claims 13 to 23 for~~

extracting a pre-determined volume sample of blood from an individual using said needle or ~~cannular~~cannula according to claim 9~~,~~;

pulsing said sample with an antigen, subsequently inhibiting cellular RNA degradation and/or gene induction therein; and ~~subsequently~~

testing RNA components in the ~~stabilised~~stabilized blood sample so pulsed.

33. (Currently amended) A kit suitable for pulsing a liquid biological sample with a first substance, and subsequently introducing an agent that inhibits cellular RNA degradation and/or gene induction thereto, and testing mRNA components in the ~~stabilised~~stabilized blood sample so pulsed, said kit comprising:

a) a vessel in which said first substance is present, and

b) a container in which said agent is present.

34. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to claim 33 wherein the inside of said vessel and the inside of said container are connected, and a physical barrier temporarily blocks said connection.

35. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~claims 33 and 34~~claim 33 wherein said first substance is ~~immobilised~~immobilized on part or all of the inside surface of said vessel.

36. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 35~~claim 33 wherein said first substance is ~~immobilised~~immobilized on a solid support.

37. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 and 34~~claim 33 wherein said first substance is a liquid.

38. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 and 34~~claim 33 wherein said first substance is a solid.

39. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 38~~claim 33 wherein said vessel comprises one or more openings.

40. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 39~~claim 33 said vessel comprises one or more areas suitable for puncture by a syringe needle.

41. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of~~ claim 40 wherein said area is a re-sealable septum.

42. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 41~~claim 33 wherein said vessel comprises one or more fittings suitable for receiving a syringe and transmitting the contents therein to the interior of said vessel.

43. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 42~~claim 33 wherein said vessel comprises one or more fittings suitable for receiving a hypodermic syringe needle.

44. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 43~~claim 33 wherein said vessel comprises one or more ~~cannular~~cannulas suitable for withdrawing bodily fluids.

45. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 44~~claim 33 wherein said vessel comprises one or more valves which are capable of ~~minimising~~minimizing the flow of liquid from the vessel, ~~minimising~~minimizing the flow of gas into or from the vessel, and/or allowing the flow of liquid biological sample into the vessel.

46. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 45~~claim 33 wherein said vessel comprises one or more means through which displaced gas may be expelled.

47. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 46~~claim 33 wherein said vessel is held under negative pressure.

48. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 47~~claim 34 wherein the physical barrier ~~of item d)~~ is opened by the application of physical force to said vessel.

49. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to claim 48 wherein said force transmits an opening means to said physical barrier.

50. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~claims 48 and 49~~claim 48 wherein said force irreversibly opens said physical barrier.

51. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 50~~claim 33 wherein said vessel and/or container comprises an indication for dispensing a known volume of ~~stabilising~~stabilizing agent therein.

52. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 51~~claim 33 wherein said first substance comprises one or more immune system antigens.

53. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to claim 52 wherein said immune system antigens are vaccine components.

54. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to claim 52 wherein said immune system antigens are antigens which provokes a hyperallergenic response.

55. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to claim 52 wherein said immune system antigens are ~~are selected from~~ one or more selected from the group consisting of histocompatibility antigens, bacterial LPS, tetanous toxoid, a cancer immunotherapy antigen, MAGE-3, a cat allergen, Feld1, antigen presenting cells from an organ donor, an autoantigen, and GAD65.

56. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 55 to~~claim 55 wherein said inhibitor of cellular RNA degradation and/or gene induction is that as found in a PAXgene™ Blood RNA Tube.

57. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 56~~claim 33 for testing the immune response of an individual towards an antigen against which the individual has been pre-~~immunised~~immunized wherein the first substance is the antigen under investigation and the mRNA tested is cytokine mRNA.

58. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to claim 57 wherein said cytokine is one or more selected from the group consisting of IL-2, IL-4, IL-13, and IFN-gamma.

59. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 56~~claim 33 for testing an individual for hyperallergenicity towards an antigen wherein the first substance is the antigen under investigation and the mRNA tested is IL-4 mRNA.

60. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~any of claims 33 to 56~~claim 33 for testing an individual for rejection of an organ transplant wherein the first substance is a histocompatibility antigen of the donor and the mRNA tested is IL-2 mRNA.

61. (Currently amended) The~~A~~ kit according to ~~ant of claims 33 to 60~~claim 33 further comprising one or more oligonucleotides suitable for said testing said mRNA(s).